

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following is a complete listing of the pending claims.

1. (Currently amended) A reagent system for substantially lysing red blood cells in a whole blood sample prior to leukocyte analysis, the reagent system comprising:
 - (a) a first reagent for substantially lysing the red blood cells in the whole blood sample, wherein the first reagent includes [[a]] an autoclaved saponin compound and an acid selected from the group consisting of a halogenated carboxylic acid, a phosphoric acid and a combination thereof; and
 - (b) a second reagent for quenching the activity of the first reagent, wherein the second reagent includes a base and has a pH value of about 8 to about 12.
2. (Currently amended) The reagent system of claim 1, wherein the first reagent further includes [[a]] an additional surfactant.
3. (Currently amended) The reagent system of claim 2, wherein the additional surfactant is selected from the group consisting of a non-ionic surfactant, a cationic surfactant and a combination thereof.
4. (Previously amended) The reagent system of claim 3, wherein the non-ionic surfactant is selected from the group consisting of an ethoxylated decylalcohol, an ethoxylated and propoxylated linear (C8 – C10) aliphatic alcohol, and a combination thereof.

5. (Currently amended) The reagent system of claim 1, wherein the autoclaved saponin compound is obtained by mixing at a calculated ratio a saponin solution heated at about 121°C for about 30 minutes and an unheated saponin solution. ~~selected from the group consisting of saponin, heat treated saponin, saponin modified by heating in the presence of a halogenated carboxylic acid, and a combination thereof.~~

6-12. (Cancelled)

13. (Currently amended) A method of lysing red blood cells and stabilizing white blood cells present in a whole blood sample, the method comprising the steps of:

(a) combining a predetermined portion of the whole blood sample with a predetermined portion of a first reagent to substantially lyse the red blood cells in the whole blood sample, wherein the first reagent includes ~~[[a]]~~ an autoclaved saponin compound and an acid; and

(b) quenching the lysing action of said first reagent by the addition of a predetermined portion of a second reagent to result in a solution containing leukocytes and substantially lysed red blood cells and having a pH value of about 3 to about 6, wherein the second reagent includes a base and has a pH value of about 8 to about 12.

14. (Currently amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the autoclaved saponin compound is obtained by mixing at a calculated ratio a saponin solution heated at about 121°C for about 30 minutes and an unheated saponin solution. ~~selected from~~

~~the group consisting of saponin, heat-treated saponin, saponin modified by heating in the presence of a halogenated carboxylic acid, and a combination thereof.~~

15. (Previously amended) The method of claim 13, wherein the acid is selected from the group consisting of a halogenated carboxylic acid, a phosphoric acid and a combination thereof.
16. (Currently amended) The method of claim 15, wherein the reagent for lysing red blood cells further includes ~~[[a]]~~ an additional surfactant.
17. (Currently amended) The method of claim 16, wherein the additional surfactant is selected from the group consisting of a non-ionic surfactant, a cationic surfactant and a combination thereof.
18. (Previously amended) The method of claim 17, wherein the non-ionic surfactant is selected from the group consisting of an ethoxylated decylalcohol, an ethoxylated and propoxylated linear (C8 – C10) aliphatic alcohol, and a combination thereof.
19. (Cancelled)
20. (New) A method of preparing a whole blood sample for leukocyte analysis, comprising the steps of:

- (a) substantially lysing red blood cells in at least a portion of the whole blood sample by adding an autoclaved saponin compound and an acid to the sample to form a mixture; and
 - (b) substantially quenching the mixture by bringing the pH value of the mixture to about 3 to about 6.
21. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the pH value of the mixture is from about 4 to about 5.